

EVERGREEN ABC WILDERNESS STUDY AREA

1. THE STUDY AREA - 2,694 acres

The Evergreen ABC WSA (NV-050-01R-16) is in Lincoln County, Nevada, approximately 85 miles north of Las Vegas. Located a few miles south of Alamo, Nevada and the Pahrnagat Wildlife Refuge, the WSA is sandwiched between the Desert National Wildlife Range to the west and U.S. Highway 93 on the east. Evergreen ABC is composed of three small sub-areas separated by private lands. Sub-area A is 2,194 acres, sub-area B is 289 acres and sub-area C is 211 acres. A combined total of 2,694 acres (Table 1). Sub-part A is approximately seven miles long and up to one mile in width; B is a little over a mile long and one-half mile wide; C is two miles long by one half mile wide. All the sub-areas are long and narrow in form.

The WSA is contiguous to the Desert National Wildlife Range along its west side. Section A's northern boundary is defined by a major drainage which intersects a road. The area's eastern boundary follows the road south for approximately 3 miles until it intersects a powerline right-of-way and then is identified as the west right-of-way boundary of the powerline. Section A is bordered to the south by a parcel of private land. Section B's northern and eastern boundaries are defined by private property. The southern portion of Section B is contiguous with the Desert National Wildlife Range.

Private property defines Section C's northern border. The eastern border follows a road which intersects the Desert National Wildlife Range at the WSA's southern boundary.

2. **RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE**- 0 acres recommended for wilderness
2,694 acres recommended for nonwilderness

The recommendation for this WSA is to release all 2,694 acres for uses other than wilderness. The lack of wilderness values, the area's small size and the elimination of conflicts with potential utility developments were the key considerations in the recommendation.

The WSA generally appears natural. Outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation are lacking due to the topographic and physical configuration of the WSA. The area's small size limits opportunities for solitude as there are few if any secluded locales. Visitors would frequently encounter one another due to the area's restrictive size and lack of topographic features. Outstanding opportunities for primitive types of recreation are unavailable as interesting destinations and focal points of interest are absent from the study area.

The no wilderness recommendation for the WSA emphasizes making the area available for utility development. Urban expansion and growth of Las Vegas Valley has sparked the need for utility expansion. Resource value for potential development of utilities outweighs the area's limited wilderness values. Over the long-term, naturalness values within the WSA could be diminished by increased motorized recreational activity and development of potential utilities. Desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizii), a special feature identified in the area, would not receive the added protection afforded from wilderness designation.

3. WILDERNESS CHARACTERISTICS

A. Naturalness: The WSA is primarily in a natural condition. The WSA is a broad, easterly sloping bajada with numerous small draws and washes. Two small stock reservoirs are within the northern portion, sub-part A. The most prominent visible man-made features are outside the WSA (highway, powerline, roads) along the area's eastern boundary.

B. Solitude: The WSA does not possess outstanding opportunities for solitude. The WSA's extremely small size, low-growing vegetation and flat easterly sloping topography provides minimal screening and virtually no secluded spots for experiencing solitude.

C. Primitive and Unconfined Recreation: The study area offers limited opportunities for horseback riding, hiking and nature study as the WSA's extremely small size limits movement. Few interesting locales and interesting features are located within the WSA that would draw visitors to the area to participate in primitive recreational experiences. At best, the area would be used for access into the Desert National Wildlife Range.

D. Special Features: The desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*), listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a threatened species on April 2, 1990, has been identified within the WSA. In 1988, a habitat management plan for the tortoise was adopted by the BLM. It calls for the categorization of their habitat by management goals. On August 4, 1989, the desert tortoise was listed, for 240 days, as an endangered species under emergency listing rules and subsequently was permanently listed as threatened on April 2, 1990.

4. MANAGEABILITY The entire study area is not capable of being managed as wilderness. Approximately 30 acres consisting of a material site right-of-way was issued in perpetuity to the Nevada Department of Transportation. Full utilization of the right-of-way is expected to occur. Extraction of sand and gravel from the site would negatively impact natural values in the WSA. There would be management concerns dealing with the WSA's small size and ORV accessibility.

5. ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCE VALUES

No known metallic or nonmetallic mineral deposits exist within the WSA as the geologic conditions are not favorable for the accumulation of these minerals. As of the date of this report, no mine, prospects, or mining claims have been identified within the WSA. The exploration for any potential locatable minerals is not projected for the study area. Sand and gravel deposits may occur in the alluvial deposits, but no commercial value is anticipated.

The study area has moderate potential for the occurrence of oil and gas because of its position with respect to the Overthrust Belt and sedimentary basin concept. To date, no wells have been drilled, nor has geophysical exploration been conducted within the WSA. Exploration for, or development of, potential energy resources is not projected to occur within the study area. Presently no oil and gas or geothermal leases exist within the WSA.

In summary, quantities of various mineral or energy resources are unknown, but the potential for occurrence for oil and gas is moderate throughout the WSA.

6. SUMMARY OF WSA-SPECIFIC PUBLIC COMMENTS

In 1986, the area was reinstated in the wilderness study process as a result of an April 1985 decision in *Sierra Club vs Watt* concerning certain lands that were deleted from wilderness review in 1982 and 1983. As a result of the court case, the area was reinventoried to document wilderness characteristics.

One public comment was received pertaining to the decision of the original inventory of the WSA. The comment disagreed with the decision that the area be approved as a Wilderness Study Area. Comments cited that the area lacked opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation.

Two public hearings were held during the public review period on the Draft Nevada Contiguous Lands Wilderness EIS. The first was in Las Vegas, Nevada, on August 3, 1988. Oral statements were presented by 22 people. Six oral statements were presented at the second hearing at Reno, Nevada on August 4, 1988. None of the oral comments supported the All Wilderness Alternative and 1 supported the Proposed Action (no wilderness).

Of 36 written comments, three supported the All Wilderness recommendation and five supported No Wilderness. Subjects of the comments were the proximity of the proposed wilderness to the Desert National Wildlife Range, possible buffer zones for the Range, desert tortoise, race courses, oil and gas potential and potential powerline intrusions.

In a letter from the Clearinghouse of the State of Nevada, dated September 7, 1988, the Director of the Clearinghouse said, "...the State concurs with the recommendation presented in the document (Draft Nevada Contiguous Lands Wilderness EIS)."

During Public Hearings oral testimony was given by a Lincoln County representative. Lincoln county supports BLM's No Wilderness (Proposed Action) recommendation.